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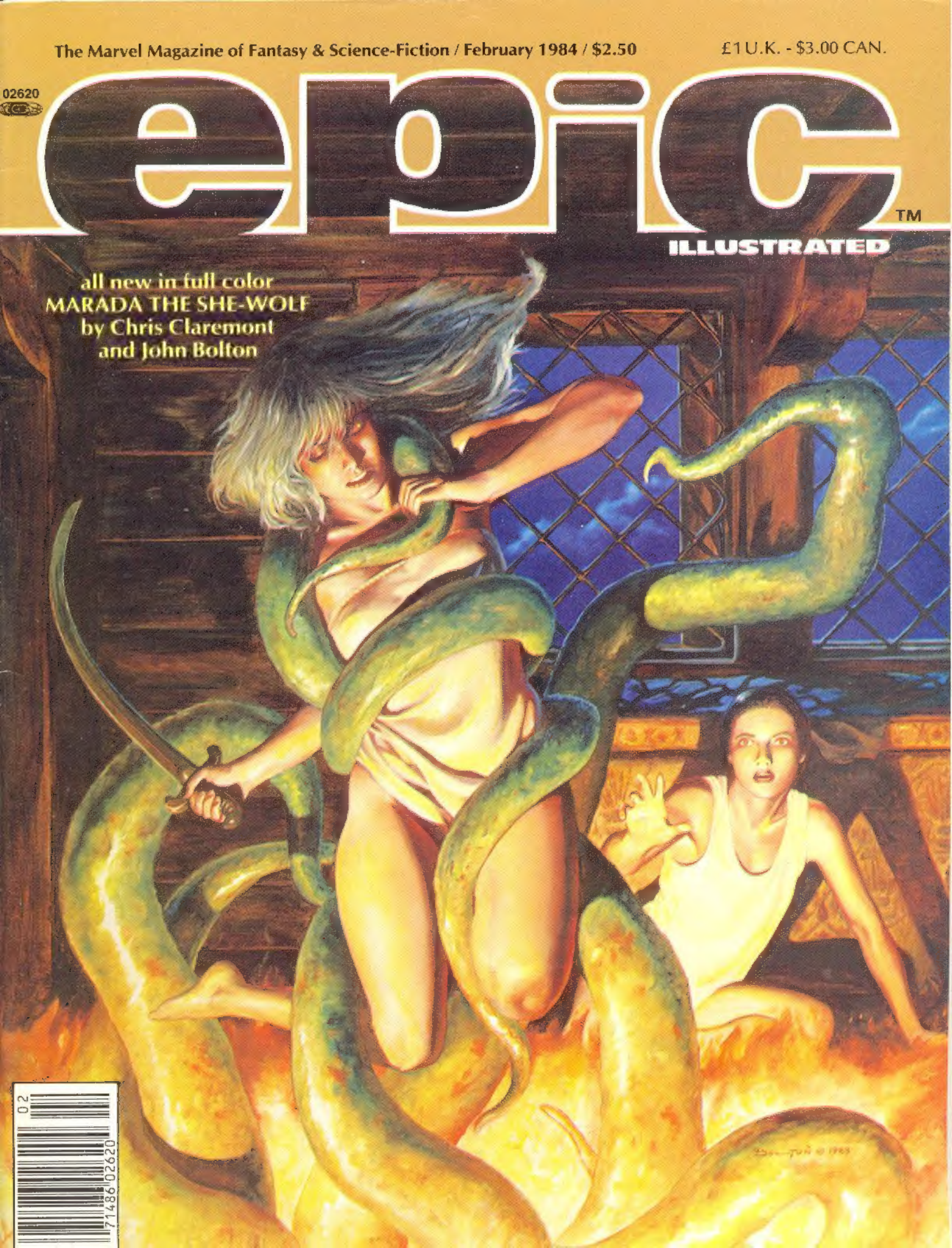
MARADA THE SHE-WOLF
by Chris Claremont
and John Bolton



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MARADA
THE SHE-WOLF

Her mother was the first-born of Caesar. Her father, a prince in his own land, a slave in Rome. At the age of four, Marada saw her father broken on the rack, disembowelled and, finally, drawn and quartered. It was a public execution and, though the Prince was a long time dying, he uttered not a sound. That night, Marada's mother fled the Eternal City, taking her child to be raised free, far from the place that had claimed the life of her beloved. That was twenty years ago. The child is a woman now, and that woman a warrior known and respected throughout the Empire.

During her travels as a mercenary, Marada ran afoul of the Mabdhara — a triad of demonlords — who perceived in her great mystic potential. One of them, Y'Garon, carried her off by force and ravished her. An old friend, Donal MacLlanllwyr, warlord of the fabled magical fortress Ashandriar, rescued Marada and offered her the protection of his home. She spent almost a year amid the safety of Donal's family, but in the end, the Mabdhara found her there. In the battle that followed, Donal was killed, and his daughter — the child-sorceress Arianrhod — was carried off to Y'Garon's domain. Marada followed and killed the demonlord, avenging Donal and rescuing Ari. The pair returned to earth, to a point thousands of miles from Ashandriar. Since then, they have traveled the continents together on their journey back to Arianrhod's home.

WIZARD'S MASQUE

FROM THE CAPTAIN'S LOG OF THE MERCHANT VESSEL RAVEN, IN THE 760th YEAR OF THE CITY OF ROME-- OUTWARD BOUND FROM ALEXANDRIA TO BRINDISIUM AND MASSILIA. THE WIND IS FAIR, THE SEA CALM, OUR HULL FULL. WE CARRY BUT TWO PASSENGERS THIS VOYAGE-- BOTH WOMEN, THOUGH ONE IS LITTLE MORE THAN A CHILD, A NORTHERN BARBARIAN NAMED ARIANRHOD.
HER COMPANION CARRIES A SWORD, AND IS CALLED MARADA.
AT A VERY EARLY AGE, THE SHE-WOLF LEARNED HOW TO GRAB WHAT REST SHE COULD, WHENEVER SHE COULD -- WARRIORS RARELY KNOW WHEN THEY'LL GET ANOTHER CHANCE.
WITHIN MOMENTS OF HER HEAD TOUCHING THE PILLOW, SHE WAS FAST ASLEEP.
ARIANRHOD HASN'T BEEN SO LUCKY.

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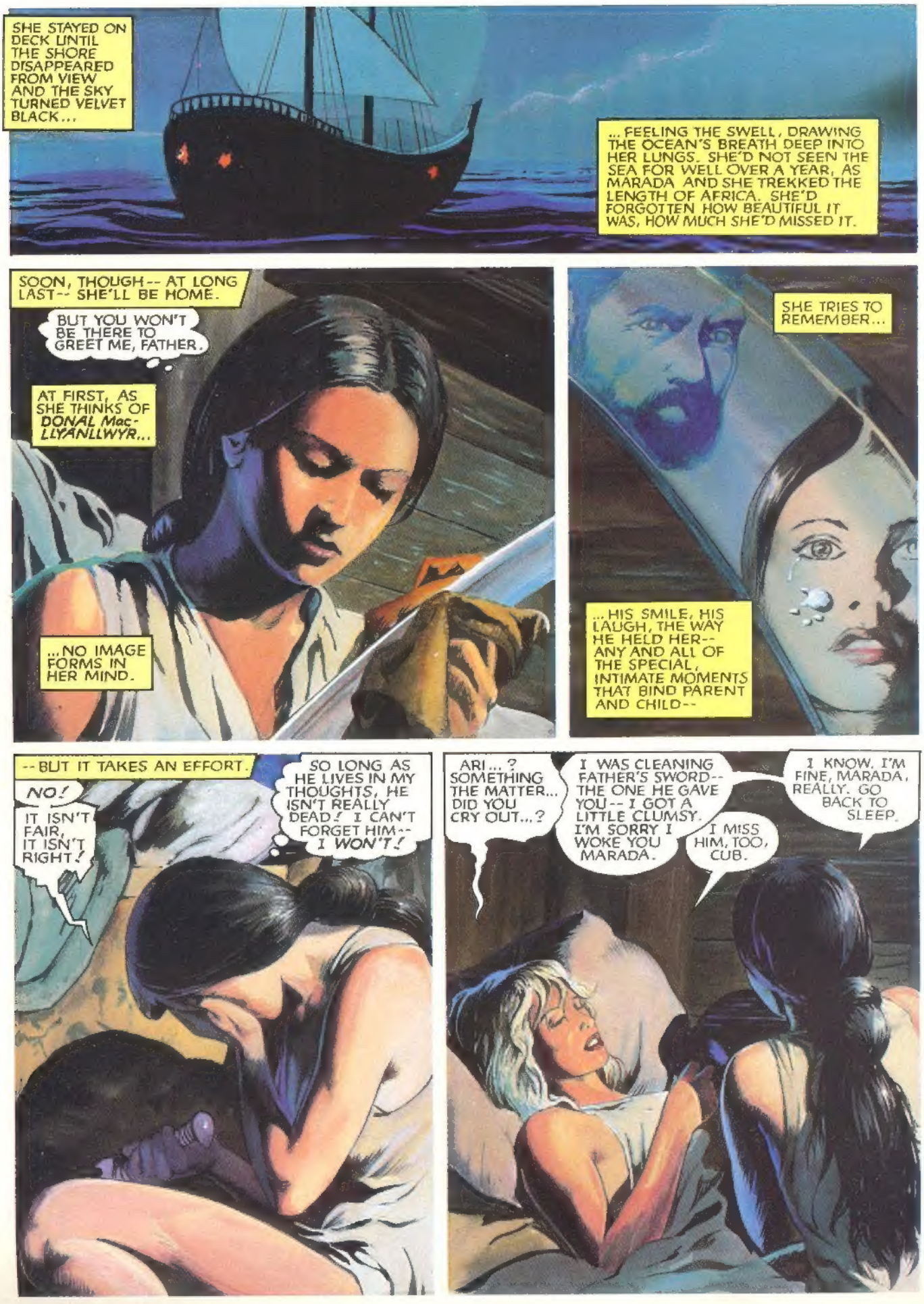
SHE STAYED ON DECK UNTIL THE SHORE DISAPPEARED FROM VIEW AND THE SKY TURNED VELVET BLACK...
... FEELING THE SWELL, DRAWING THE OCEAN'S BREATH DEEP INTO HER LUNGS. SHE'D NOT SEEN THE SEA FOR WELL OVER A YEAR, AS MARADA AND SHE TREKKED THE LENGTH OF AFRICA. SHE'D FORGOTTEN HOW BEAUTIFUL IT WAS, HOW MUCH SHE'D MISSED IT.
SOON, THOUGH -- AT LONG LAST -- SHE'LL BE HOME.
BUT YOU WON'T BE THERE TO GREET ME, FATHER.
AT FIRST, AS SHE THINKS OF DONAL Mac-LLYANLLWYR...
...NO IMAGE FORMS IN HER MIND.
SHE TRIES TO REMEMBER...
...HIS SMILE, HIS LAUGH, THE WAY HE HELD HER -- ANY AND ALL OF THE SPECIAL, INTIMATE MOMENTS THAT BIND PARENT AND CHILD --
-- BUT IT TAKES AN EFFORT.
NO! IT ISN'T FAIR, IT ISN'T RIGHT!
SO LONG AS HE LIVES IN MY THOUGHTS, HE ISN'T REALLY DEAD! I CAN'T FORGET HIM -- I WON'T!
ARI...? SOMETHING THE MATTER... DID YOU CRY OUT...?
I WAS CLEANING FATHER'S SWORD -- THE ONE HE GAVE YOU -- I GOT A LITTLE CLUMSY. I'M SORRY I WOKE YOU MARADA.
I MISS HIM, TOO, CUB.
I KNOW. I'M FINE, MARADA, REALLY. GO BACK TO SLEEP.

IT'S PARTLY MY FAULT FATHER DIED-- COULD THAT BE WHY ALL MY ATTEMPTS TO CONTACT GRAND-MOTHER HAVE FAILED? DOES RHIANNON BLAME ME, IS THIS HER WAY OF PUNISHING ME?!
OR IS MY OWN IGNORANCE THE CAUSE?
I'M A SORCERESS IN MY OWN RIGHT...
... AND THIS ENCHANTED BLADE COULD FOCUS MY POWER.
BUT DARE I USE IT TO TRY TO SEND US HOME?!!
THE SPELLS ARE COMPLEX-- AND DANGEROUS. I'D BARELY BEGUN TO MASTER THEM WHEN I WAS STOLEN FROM ASHANDRIAR.
I'D HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED TO THE DEMON-LORD Y'GARON, IF MARADA HADN'T RESCUED ME. A MISTAKE NOW COULD HURL US BACK TO HIS DOMAIN-- OR WORSE!
I'D BEST LEAVE HER OUT OF THIS. IF I'M SUCCESSFUL, RHIANNON CAN BRING HER THE REST OF THE WAY. IF I'M NOT -- WELL, AT LEAST SHE'LL BE ALIVE AND SAFE. THIS IS MY GAMBLE-- MY IMPATIENCE THAT PROMPTS ME TO IT-- LET THE RISK BE MINE ALONE.
Valiant
ARIANRHOD-- THAT SCREAM--
--BLESSED MINERVA!

I OPENED THE GATE BETWEEN WORLDS-- I ONLY WANTED TO GO HOME-- BUT MY WORDS DIDN'T PROTECT ME!
CHILD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!!
STAY AWAY, MARADA-- GET OUT OF HERE-- BEFORE IT GRABS YOU, TOO!
MARADA, ITS TOUCH BURNS!!!
HAVE COURAGE, CUB! I'LL SOON HAVE YOU FREE!
THE FLOOR-- WITHIN ARI'S CIRCLE, IT FADES TO NOTHINGNESS!
THE CREATURE HAS NO BODY I CAN SEE OR REACH-- NO HEAD OR HEART I CAN STRIKE TO KILL IT!

TAKE MY HAND! BE READY TO JUMP WHEN I PULL!
I -- I'M TRYING!
ARI, YOUR MAGICKS BROUGHT THIS HORROR TO US, USE THEM TO BANISH IT!
DO BETTER THAN THAT-- QUICKLY -- OR WE ARE LOST!
MARADA, LOOK OUT!
IT'S YANKED ME INTO THE CENTER OF THE CIRCLE -- I'VE NOTHING TO BRACE MYSELF AGAINST.
MARADA!!!

ANOTHER PLACE, ANOTHER DAY--
THE DROMOND SEEMED LIKE EASY PICKINGS. TOO LATE COMES TARIC'S REALIZATION THAT THIS IS A TRAP-- THAT THE GALLEY CARRIES NOT THE WEALTH OF AN EMPIRE, BUT SOLDIERS, EAGER FOR HIS HEAD.

DAMN YOU, MONSTER-- LET ME GO!

SENSING EASIER PREY NEARBY, THE CREATURE DOES PRECISELY THAT...
YARRRRGH!

...AND SPEEDILY RETURNS WHENCE IT CAME.
MORE LUCK THAN THIS, I DON'T DESERVE. I WISH THOSE MEN THE SAME-- OR INSTANT, PAINLESS DEATH.
WHERE AM I? WHAT KIND OF MESS HAVE I BEEN HURLED INTO?!

MEN OF THE KAYDIF-- TARIC REDHAND HAS SUMMONED A DEMON-WITCH TO AID HIM!
SLAY HER!

I'M NEITHER DEMON NOR WITCH, FOOL...
... AND I HAD NO QUARREL WITH ANY ABOARD THIS TUB...

... UNTIL YOU MADE ONE!

YOU KILLED OUR CAPTAIN!

SINCE HE MEANS SO MUCH TO YOU...
...BY ALL MEANS, JOIN HIM!

THOUGH BORN A PRINCESS, GRAND-DAUGHTER OF CAESAR, MARADA LEARNED TO HOLD A SWORD ALMOST AS SOON AS SHE COULD WALK, AND HAS LIVED BY IT EVER SINCE. FEW CAN MATCH HER SKILL, NONE HER FEROCITY...
... AS THE KAYDIF'S TROOPS SOON LEARN...
...THEIR IMMINENT, CERTAIN VICTORY TRANSFORMED BEFORE THEIR EYES INTO A ROUT.
BY ADONIS, I TRULY THOUGHT THIS DAY WOULD PROVE THE END OF US!
BEHOLD OUR SAVIOR -- A GODDESS RISEN FROM HADES' DREAD DOMAIN, A SHINING FURY! CHEER, MY LUSTY BRAVOS, DO HER HONOR -- SHE DESERVES IT!
TARIC REDHAND -- SCOURGE OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS -- BIDS YOU WELCOME, LADY! ANYTHING WE POSSESS IS YOURS!

DAYS LATER.
THAT'S DJERIABAR, THE BLACK ISLE. THE TOWER ON YONDER HEADLAND BELONGS TO JAFFAR.
SINCE SORCERY BROUGHT YOU HERE, I'LL WAGER IT'S THE BEST-- MAYHAP THE ONLY-- MEANS OF YOUR RETURN. JAFFAR, PEOPLE SAY, IS THE GREATEST WIZARD IN THE WORLD!
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF HIM.
WHAT DOES THAT PROVE, STAR-HAIR? YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF ME!
IF HE'S HALF AS GOOD AS HIS REPUTATION, JAFFAR'S PROBABLY WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
OF COURSE, THERE'S NO GUARANTEE HE'LL AID YOU, EVEN ASSUMING HE GRANTS AN AUDIENCE --WHICH HE NEVER DOES A MAN WHO MAKES HIS OWN GOLD CAN'T BE BOUGHT, NOR CAN SUCH AS HE-- MASTER OF DJINNS AND AFRITS-- BE THREATENED.
IT'S MY EXPERIENCE THAT SORCERERS ARE RARELY TEMPTED BY PLEASURES OF THE FLESH...
...AND YOU CAN'T APPEAL TO HIS BETTER NATURE, BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE ONE.
HE MIGHT ENSLAVE OR KILL YOU-- IF YOU'RE LUCKY. WHY TAKE THE RISK?
STAY WITH ME, MARADA. BE FIRST-MATE-- OF MY SHIP AND MY BED-- YOU'LL NOT BE SORRY.
BUT YOU MIGHT, TARIC.
I VOWED TO ARIANRHOD'S FATHER ON HIS DEATHBED I'D SEE HER SAFELY HOME. WHILE I--OR SHE--YET LIVE, I'LL NOT BE FORSWORN.
AND WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D BE CONTENT TO SHARE EITHER BED OR COMMAND?
HAH! TOO TRUE-- AND I'LL WAGER I'D NOT BE PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME IF YOU CHALLENGED ME.
LET'S PART THEN AS FRIENDS AND COMRADES-IN-ARMS SHOULD, OVER A JUG OF GOOD WINE!

SOON, IN THE CITY'S CENTRAL BAZAAR .
ISN'T THIS A BIT CONSPICUOUS-- NOT TO MENTION FOOLHARDY-- FOR ONE IN YOUR PROFESSION? I ASSUMED WE'D DRINK ABOARD SHIP.
WHAT SPORT IS THERE IN THAT?
PIRATES ARE DRAWN AND QUARTERED, TARIC
ONLY IF RECOGNIZED, MARADA, AND CAUGHT
Y-YOU! IT IS YOU-- T-TARIC REDHAND !!!
YOU WERE SAYING ?
AMAHL ibn HAMAD--HOW NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
MERCHANT, YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE THIS IS NOT TARIC.
OH?!? H-HOW CARELESS OF ME--M-MY FEEBLE EYES -- SO VERY SORRY...
WHAT GOES ON HERE-- TARIC REDHAND THE PIRATE!!
SEIZE HIM-- MMMPGH!!
TARIC, I HATE TO INTERRUPT..
THEN DON'T. I'M SURE YOU'RE PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF COPING ON YOUR OWN.
ON THE OTHER HAND..
.WHY SHOULD I LET YOU HAVE ALL THE FUN?
CRUNK
ONE OF THESE DAYS, CORSAIR, YOUR ARROGANCE WILL COST YOU
AT WORST, ONLY MY LIFE.
AND I'LL LOSE THAT ANYWAY, SOONER OR LATER

IN THE MEANTIME, THE DANGER ONLY MAKES LIFE THAT MUCH SWEETER.
WHO DARES NOTHING, MARADA, GAINS NOTHING.
AND WHO PUSHES HIS LUCK, GOOD CAPTAIN...
...MAY SUDDENLY FIND HIMSELF FIGHTING ALONE.
YOU WOULDN'T DESERT A COMRADE--!
ALAS, NO
BUT SOMETIMES, TARIC, YOU MAKE THE THOUGHT SO TEMPTING.
YOU KNOW THIS RATS' WARREN OF A CITY-- WHICH WAY?!
WE'LL HAVE TO LOSE THESE GUDGEONS BEFORE WE DARE RETURN TO THE SHIP.
I'M AFRAID YOU'VE LITTLE HOPE OF SEEING THE WIZARD NOW
I CAN SEE YOU'RE HEART-BROKEN BECAUSE OF IT.
NOT HARDLY! MY DAYS WITH YOU MAY BE SHORT, BUT THINK OF THE TALES I'LL HAVE TO TELL IN PARADISE. I'LL BE THE ENVY OF ZEUS HIMSELF!
MAKE FOR THOSE STAIRS! WE'LL MOVE FASTER ACROSS THE ROOF-TOPS!

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! COME ON!
THE LADS SEEM SO EAGER TO SHED OUR BLOOD-
- BE A SHAME TO DISAPPOINT THEM
YOU MAD FOOL!
DAMN STRAIGHT! IT'S A REPUTATION I'VE SPENT YEARS PERFECTING!
YOU WON'T LAUGH SO LOUDLY IF THEY BRING IN MEN BEHIND US...
OR SUMMON ARCHERS TO PICK US OFF AT LONG-RANGE!
WHERE'S YOUR SENSE OF ROMANCE, MARADA, OR
ADVENTURE!?!
TARIC!
IT SEEMS... FATHER ZEUS.. IS MORE EAGER TO HEAR MY STORIES... THAN I ANTICIPATED
WHY DIDN'T HE LISTEN TO ME?! WE'D HAVE BOTH BEEN FAR FROM HERE, SAFE AND ALIVE!
WHAT PRICE YOUR COURAGE AND BRAVADO NOW, TARIC?

(continues on page 92)

THE SACRED & THE PROFANE

IT IS WITH FOLDED HANDS AND DOWNCAST EYES THAT I CHASTISE MYSELF FOR WEAKNESS AND LACK OF VISION. THAT I AM ABLE TO DO THIS IS OF LITTLE COMFORT, FOR IT HAS TAKEN AN ENORMOUS AND SILENT EVIL TO BRING ME TO THIS STATE. I CAN TAKE NO MORE PRIDE IN MY REVELATION THAN I CAN IN MY REBELLION

§ THE DISASTER IN THE HANGER HAS LEFT ME FEARFULLY ALERT ALMOST DESPERATE. MY SENSE OF GUILT HAS BECOME A KIND OF NERVOUS ASSURANCE

§ IT IS SAID THAT DESIRE AND DANGER MAKE EVERYONE SIMPLE OUR PLIGHT HAS OPENED OUR EYES WE SUDDENLY SEE OURSELVES AND OUR PURPOSE WITH A CLARITY THAT HAD ALL BUT DISAPPEARED SINCE WE LEFT EARTH FIVE YEARS AGO

§ I REMEMBER WHAT THE REVEREND FATHER SAID WHEN I TOOK MY FINAL VOWS. "TO BECOME TRUE SISTERS OF SAINT MARY YOU MUST, MY CHILDREN, DIE TO THE WORLD, TO YOUR PARENTS TO YOUR FRIENDS, AND YOURSELVES, AND LIVE FOR JESUS CHRIST ALONE." YEARS LATER, IN BRIEFING FOR SAINT CATHERINE'S MISSION, THOSE WORDS SEEMED IRONIC CONSIDERING THAT WE WOULD NEVER RETURN TO EARTH IT IS ODD. I HAVE ALWAYS ACCEPTED THE IDEA THAT OUR LIVES WOULD SOMEDAY END VERY VERY FAR AWAY BUT IT HAS NEVER OCCURRED TO ME THAT THEY MIGHT END IN VIOLENCE OUR JOURNEY BARELY BEGUN

§ NOW WE MUST LOOK TO MEN SUCH AS JOSHUA FOR HOPE. MOTHER ANAIS IS RIGHT. THE TRUE POWER OF HOPE EXISTS ONLY IN THE FACE OF DISASTER. IT IS THE MOMENT WHEN HOPE CEASES TO BE REASONABLE THAT IT BECOMES USEFUL

S. Marianna

By Dean Motter and Ken Steacy A STAR † REACH PRODUCTION c MCMLXXXII

Descent of Order

IT WOULD SEEM, YOUR HOLINESS THAT BROTHER JOSHUA HERE HAS PUT THE ENTIRE MISSION IN DANGER! HIS ACTIONS ARE ARE UNJUSTIFIABLE!
THE RESPONSIBILITY IS MINE, ARCH BISHOP. NOT HIS. I SANCTIONED THE E.V.A.
YOU. YOUR WORSHIP?
THE SITUATION APPEARED TOO GRAVE — TOO URGENT. THE ORDER WAS RECKLESS AND OBVIOUSLY FUTILE. I AM A CARDINAL, NOT A GENERAL. IT WAS MY ERROR
IT WAS NO ERROR! IT WAS THE ONLY RATIONAL DECISION WE COULD HAVE MADE
YEAH. AND LOOK WHERE IT'S LEFT US!

ERIC WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY?
I FEAR THE BEST I CAN OFFER IS SPECULATION YOUR WORSHIP WE NEED TIME TO OBSERVE THESE ORGANISMS WHILE THEY MAY BE DANGEROUS I DON'T THINK THEY'RE MALEVOLENT THEIR MOVEMENTS MAY BE AS RANDOM AND MEANINGLESS AS OUR OWN
PERHAPS OUR ATTEMPTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM WERE TOO OVERWHELMING AND CONSTITUTED SOME SORT OF THREAT IN ANY EVENT I SUGGEST THAT WE TAKE CARE NOT TO PROJECT OUR OWN FEARS INTO THIS SITUATION
ARE YOU PEOPLE BLIND? THOSE DEMONS HAVE INFESTED ST CATHERINE'S WE MUST TAKE ACTION
THAT IS ENOUGH!
GENTLEMEN PLEASE
WE ARE IN JEOPARDY BUT THIS IS STILL A MISSION OF THE CHURCH LET US CONDUCT OUR AFFAIRS AS MEN OF GOD I MUST INSIST ON YOUR DISCRETION OUTSIDE THESE CHAMBERS LET US PRAY FOR PROTECTION AS WELL AS GUIDANCE

There was no more you could have done for him Doctor. He died with a prayer on his lips. The Lord will have mercy
Yes
Make the arrangements will you Sister Marianna
Of course
Bishop Brock. I'm afraid that Brother Paul, the pilot, has passed on
Not another... I will be in the Chapel in one hour.

You were saying, Uncle?
I was saying that up until now I've feigned ignorance of your indiscretions. If you would conduct yourself in a manner that reflected more favourably upon both of us —
Of course. Your reputation is at stake — and I'm soiling it by being "indiscreet"
Joan, when my sister . . . your mother passed away I promised her that I would look after you in —
In the depths of space? Spare me! I'd rather be back in the Boston prep school! I was shanghai'd — Let's not forget that!
You'll not speak to me like that, young lady!

I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS VICTOR THOSE THINGS ARE INSINUATING THEMSELVES INTO THE SHIP AND WE RE TO DO NOTHING? ARE CLERGY PLANNING SOMETHING THEY RE NOT TELLING US?
HOW CAN THEY? THEY NEED US TO IMPLEMENT EVERYTHING WE THROW THE SWITCHES!
I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHY ST CATHERINE S ISN'T ARMED BETTER! A TINY SQUADRON OF FIGHTERS PILOTED BY A BUNCH OF MONKS I MEAN, REALLY!
WELL, WELL, LOOKS LIKE A CONSPIRACY ROOM FOR ONE MORE?
JOAN -- HEY LISTEN WE WEREN T BAGGING JOSHUA
FORGET IT YOU GUYS ALL ON ALERT?
YEAH WELL, ON ROTATION OF COURSE
GREAT

THIS IS THE CHAPEL. SEND HELP RIGHT AWAY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. JUST GET SOMEONE UP HERE NOW!

THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE
continues next issue

THE SCROLL

BY LARRY S. GLOVER

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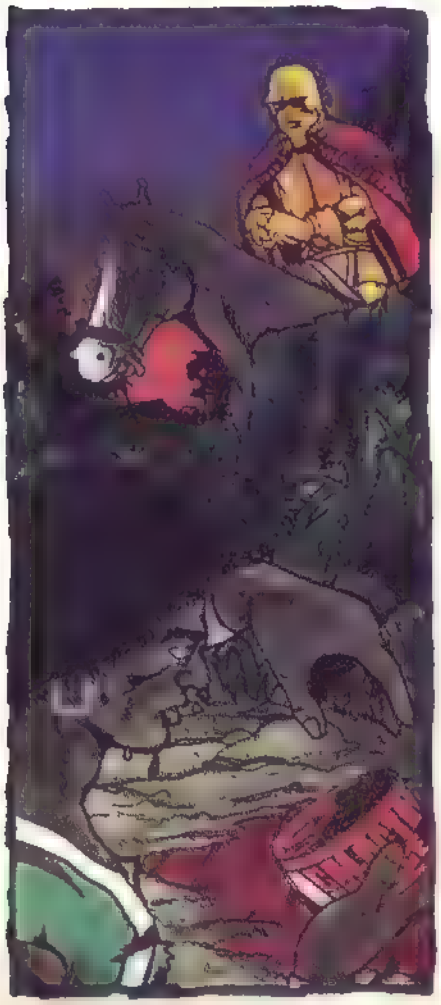
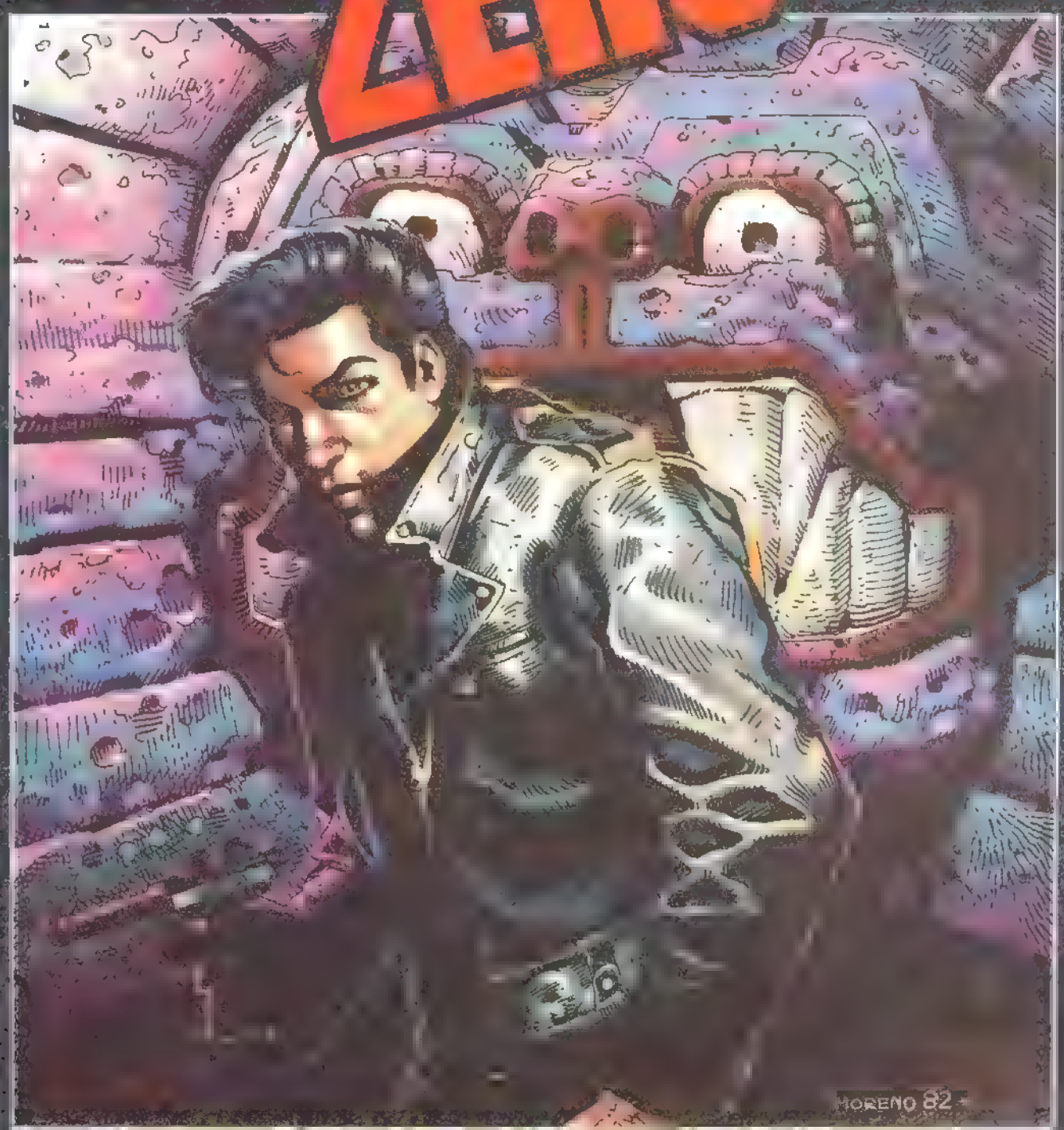


TO APPEAR FOR
JURY DUTY

GENERATION ZERO

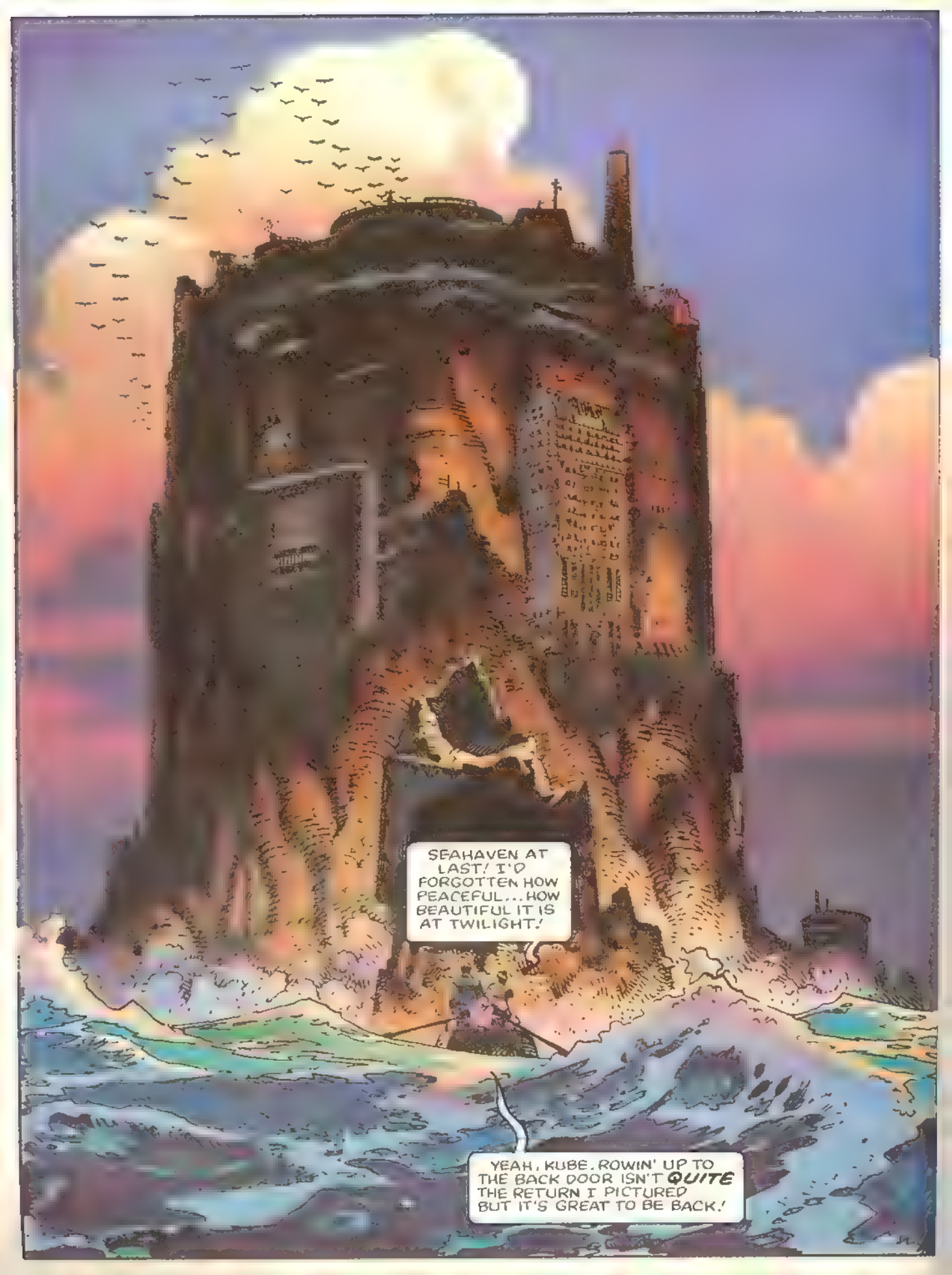


TERROR IN PARADISE

ANGRY VOICES SOUND BELOW THE CHILL SURFACE OF ICE LAND. THE NORTHOLD COUNCIL IS MEETING. THEIR SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION..
...JUAN FALCÓN! YOUR NEPHEW, MR PRESIDENT, OBVIOUSLY FOLLOWS YOUR BROTHER'S PATH!
HE HAS BEEN RECKLESS. PERHAPS MORE CONCERNED WITH FINDING HIS FATHER...
...AND PROVING VICTOR ISN'T CONNECTED WITH THIS TOTALITARIAN HORDE FROM THE MIDDLE-EAST THAN IN LOCATING A SAFE LAND FOR US AND OUR NEW ALLIES, THE SEAHAVEN COLONY. THIS DOES NOT MAKE JUAN A TRAITOR...
BUT AFTER SEEING THE OLD WORLD RIPPED APART BY NUCLEAR DISASTER, I VE VOWED TO UNITE THIS NEW ONE. IF PRESERVING UNION MEANS ALLOWING YOU TO CENSURE THE BOY,.. I WON'T OPPOSE IT
THE COMDEMNATION IS MADE OFFICIAL. WHILE THOUSANDS OF MILES TO THE SOUTH
...THE ONE CONDEMNED HAS OTHER MATTERS TO CONCERN HIM. MATTERS THAT AT ONCE ELATE JUAN FALCÓN.
. AND FILL HIM WITH FRUSTRATION
FINALLY... WORD FROM MY POP HIDDEN RIGHT IN THE STATUE HE INDICATED ON THE CHART WE FOLLOWED HERE YEAH... WORD FROM POP. AND I CAN'T HEAR IT!
VALLEY SEEMS TO GO ON FOREVER... HUH, KUBE?
DANCER, MY FRIEND, IT IS EVERYTHING NORTHOLD OR SEAHAVEN MIGHT NEED...! IF ONLY WE COULD TELL THEM, YES, JOHNNY?

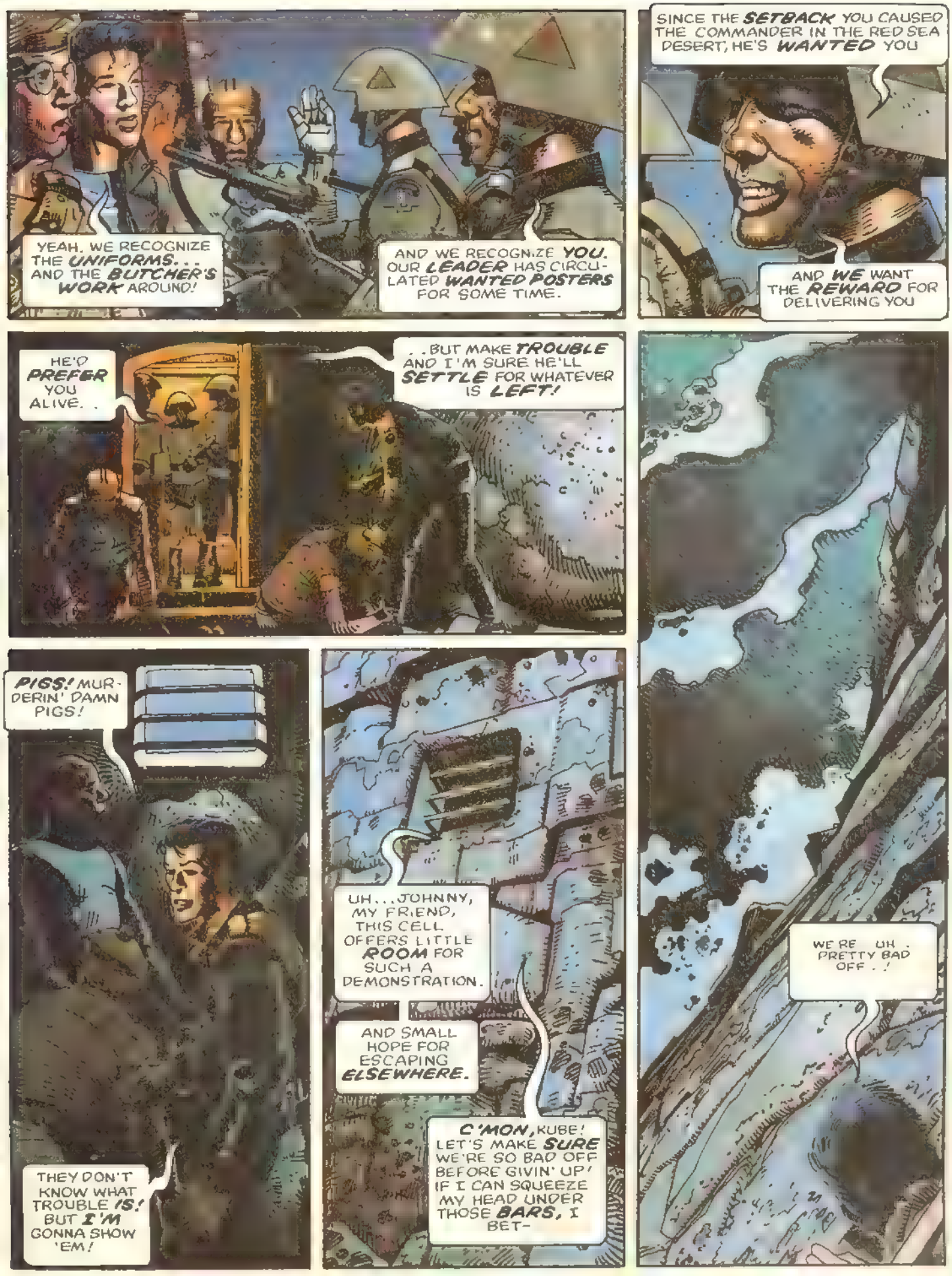
© 1983 Pepe Moreno

YEAH.. IF! IF OUR COM-SET WEREN'T DESTROYED...I COULD PLAY POP'S VIDEO-TAPE, TOO
THEY HOPED FOR SOMETHING SIMILAR TO THE JETCRAFT LOST REACHING THESE SHORES. THEY SETTLE FOR WHAT FINALLY ARRIVES... A SCAVENGER FREIGHTER.
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY KIND OF VCR... AND YOUR COM-SET'S DOWN? THAT'S--
COUNT YOUR BLESSIN'S, MATE! WE'RE A TRADE VESSEL... NOT THE QUEEN-BLOODY-ELIZABETH! FOLKS IN SEAHAVEN'VE DONE A FEW FAVORS FOR US... RESCUIN' YOU IS OUR WAY OF REPAYIN' 'EM.
PLENTY OF TAPE-PLAYERS IN SEAHAVEN, JOHNNY. AND WHEN THEY HEAR WHAT WE'VE DISCOVERED, THEY'LL HAPPILY GIVE 'EM ALL TO YOU, AMIGO!
LET'S GET BACK TO THE COAST BEFORE WE MISS OUR RIDE.
PRECIOUS FEW IN THIS BUGGERED-UP NEW WORLD HAVE THE KIND'A LONG RANGE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEM YOU LOT BLITHELY RUINED. SO DON'T COMPLAIN... ENJOY THE TRIP!
IT IS A LONG ONE, PARTICULARLY, FOR JUAN FALCON
S'POSE IT'S BAD NEWS FROM POP? MAYBE HE REALLY HAS JOINED THAT BUNCH'A GOONS FROM THE DESERT. HOW'LL I FACE LIANA THEN ..? HER PEOPLE...?
THEIR HARBOR'S TOO SHALLOW FOR THIS OL' DINOSAUR. FROM HERE, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!
FROM HERE... EVEN WE CAN'T MISS IT, SKIPPER!
FINALLY .
JOHNNY... KUBE ..
A GOOD SIGHT, MY FRIEND ONE I SOMETIMES DOUBTED WE'D SEE AGAIN.


SEAHAVEN AT LAST! I'D FORGOTTEN HOW PEACEFUL... HOW BEAUTIFUL IT IS AT TWILIGHT!
YEAH, KUBE. ROWIN' UP TO THE BACK DOOR ISN'T QUITE THE RETURN I PICTURED BUT IT'S GREAT TO BE BACK!

STILL... SHOULDN'T SOMEBODY HAVE SPOTTED US BY NOW? I'M NOT TALKIN' BRASS BANDS OR ANYTHING, JOHNNY, BUT A GUARD OR TWO?
SECURITY WAS NEVER A STRONG POINT HERE, DANCER..
.. MOSTLY THEY DEPEND ON THE LOCATION BEING KEPT SECRET AND--
WAIT A SECOND, KURE, JOHNNY...
. I'M AFRAID WHATEVER THEY'VE BEEN DEPENDIN'ON . STOPPED WORKING.
AW... NO... NO!
WHO DID IT, .?

WHAT . . . KIND. . .?
JOHNNY... PERHAPS NOT EVERYONE PERISHED PERHAPS -
BOTH OF YOU KEEP IT LOW... AND TAKE A LOOK HERE
WHAT KIND OF BASTARDS DID THIS?!
SOMEONE'S STILL ALIVE .
WE'D BETTER SNEAK DOWN GET CLOSER.
MAKE SURE IF WE'RE FACIN' FRIEND OR-
FOE
KLIK
KLIK
KLIK


YEAH, WE RECOGNIZE THE UNIFORMS... AND THE BUTCHER'S WORK AROUND!
AND WE RECOGNIZE YOU. OUR LEADER HAS CIRCULATED WANTED POSTERS FOR SOME TIME.
SINCE THE SETBACK YOU CAUSED THE COMMANDER IN THE RED SEA DESERT, HE'S WANTED YOU
AND WE WANT THE REWARD FOR DELIVERING YOU
HE'D PREFER YOU ALIVE. .
. . BUT MAKE TROUBLE AND I'M SURE HE'LL SETTLE FOR WHATEVER IS LEFT!
PIGS! MURDERIN' DAMN PIGS!
THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT TROUBLE IS! BUT I'M GONNA SHOW 'EM!
UH... JOHNNY, MY FRIEND, THIS CELL OFFERS LITTLE ROOM FOR SUCH A DEMONSTRATION.
AND SMALL HOPE FOR ESCAPING ELSEWHERE.
C'MON, KUBE! LET'S MAKE SURE WE'RE SO BAD OFF BEFORE GIVIN' UP! IF I CAN SQUEEZE MY HEAD UNDER THOSE BARS, I BET-
WE RE UH . PRETTY BAD OFF . !

BUT AS JUAN DUCKS BACK HE HEARS SOMETHING FROM BELOW
VOICES! DOESN'T SOUND LIKE GUARDS. I THINK SOMEBODY'S CRYING..
BOOST ME UP... LET ME GET A BETTER ANGLE... YEAH! I CAN SEE LIGHT!
THERE MAY BE SURVIVORS IN CELLS BELOW US! DANCER, IF YOU'VE GOT ANY IDEAS
KRIII-I-IK!
AMIGO, I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK.
DON'T HAVE ENOUGH LINE TO REACH ANY PLACE SAFE. BUT IF ALL YOU GOT IN MIND IS LOCAL SIGHTSEEIN'...
MEANWHILE..
INTERESTING WORD FROM THE SEAHAVEN EXPEDITION, SIR.. ABOUT THREE NEW CAPTIVES.
THREE?
ALERT THEM I'LL BE ARRIVING SOONER THAN PLANNED...
".. AND THAT THOSE CAPTIVES MUST NOT BE UNDER ESTIMATED."

DANCER'S LINE MUST BE NEARLY PLAYED OUT...
.. BUT IT'S LONG ENOUGH! I CAN SEE IN NOW AN'--
LIANA!
J-JUAN...? OH, DEAR GOD. . JUAN!
AND ALL THE UGLY FEARS THAT HAVE EATEN AT JUAN FALCON SINCE HE GLIMPSED THE FIRST CORPSE ON SEAHAVEN'S WALLS...
...FLOW AWAY WITH THE SIGHT BEFORE HIM, WITH THE SOFT TOUCH OF LIANA ADEN
WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD. WE THOUGHT THAT'S HOW THOSE ANIMALS--
--LOCATED SEAHAVEN? NO .. NEVER!
AN YOU'RE NOT GONNA WIND UP AS THEIR SLAVE LABOR EITHER KUBE, DANCER, AN ME ARE GETTIN' EVERY-BODY OUT!
ALL I GOTTA DO IS FIGURE HOW!
JOHNNY, THOSE ROCKS BEHIND YOU...! THEY'RE PART OF THE ORIGINAL VOLCANO SEAHAVEN'S BUILT ON... AND DOTTED WITH OLD WORK PATHS AND TUNNELS. IT'S TERRIBLY RISKY, BUT IF YOU COULD SWING OUT THERE..
LADY, NOW THAT I'M BACK WITH YOU... I CAN DO ANYTHING.

IT ISN'T QUITE SO SIMPLE BUT USING BELTS AND LEATHER STRIPS FROM OTHER PRISONERS' CLOTHING TO LENGTHEN DANCER'S LINE IT'S NOT IM POSSIBLE ONLY INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT
JOHNNY... I'VE NEVER BEEN FOND OF HEIGHTS!
WE'RE NOT ASKIN' YOU TO LOVE THE VIEW, KUBE... JUST IGNORE IT AN' SLIDE DOWN! SWINGIN' OVER TO THIS SECTION WAS THE WORST PART.
THE DECAYED, LONG UNUSED WALKWAYS ARE NO PICNICS EITHER...
. BUT IN TIME THEY LEAD TO A RUST FACED DOOR...
.. THAT IS NO MATCH FOR DANCER'S CYBER ARM.
AND DONALD MZIMBA, PETER KUBESKY, AND JUAN FALCÓN ENTER A LABYRINTH OF VOLCANIC ROCK
LIANA SAID REPAIR CREWS COME IN HERE ONCE IN A WHILE... THAT'S WHY THE LANTERNS WERE AROUND THEY USUALLY ENTER BY THE MAIN ENTRANCE WE'RE HEADED FOR...
JUST DON'T GET US LOST, AMIGO WE'RE RACIN' DAYBREAK AS IT IS.
BUT THOUGH DAWN'S FIRST PINK LIGHT WAILS AT THE MAZE'S END
.. THERE ARE STILL SHADOWS AND COVER ENOUGH
MUST BE GOIN' OFF DUTY SOON... OR THESE GUYS'D NEVER BE SO CARELESS!

GOTTA HIT BEFORE THE NEXT SHIFT COMES ON OR--
THEY WILL HIT US!
MESS HALL! THEY'RE ALL HAVIN' BREAKFAST
UH-UH, JUAN. LAST SUPPER.
DANCER, IF WE GIVE 'EM A CHANCE THEY MIGHT SURRENDER--
OR GET AWAY TO HANG UP MORE OF OUR FRIENDS FOR THE VULTURES! YOUR DECISION, JUAN...
I'VE MADE MINE!
VRAAAP!
BUDDAPKOW
IN THE END, IT'S NOT THAT MUCH OF A DECISION

IN THE END, SOME INVADERS DO SURRENDER... AND SOME MANAGE FLIGHT.
BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, IN THE END A POPULATION FACING SLAVERY AND DEATH...
... IS AGAIN FREE THERE ARE REUNIONS. VOCAL...
DANCER...! YOU CAME BACK!
'COURSE! DIDN'T I SAY I WOULD? OIL-GULPING ARM AND ALL, TAL!
AND SILENT
PEACE RETURNS TO A SEAHAVEN THAT IS NOW FOREVER CHANGED
PEACE...
...OR PERHAPS MERELY A LULL
SIR...! YOU MUST CANCEL THE FLIGHT!
A PLANE JUST RETURNED FROM THE ISLAND.. ESCAPED, REALLY.
THERE'S BEEN A COUNTER-ATTACK AND--
YES THAT DOES MEAN A CHANGE OF PLAN.
INSTEAD OF BECOMING A USEFUL BASE AND BREEDING POOL FOR SLAVE RESERVES...
SEAHAVEN MUST BE GROUND INTO DUST.
A AS YOU SAY, COMMANDER FALCON!

GENERATION ZERO CONTINUES NEXT ISSUE!

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT LIES BEYOND THE REACH OF OUR EYES AND EARS AND WINGS...
WHAT MIGHT BE, OR COULD BE, OR WISH TO BE?
LET ME TELL YOU OF ONE SUCH MAY-BE...
THE LEGEND
©83 L. SUTTON/C. VESS
ABOVE US... BEYOND THE LAST KNOWN CAVERN--
--DWELLS A LIGHT BRIGHTER THAN THE GREATEST FIRE... AND A HEAT MORE SEARING THAN THE DEEPEST MAGMA!
SEEKING ADVENTURE, A HERO BRAVED THE LONG CLIMB UPWARD...
...AND FACED STRANGE DANGERS IN HIS QUEST FOR THE LIGHT AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD!

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ON AND ON, HE CLIMBED--AND NEITHER FEAR NOR THE DENIZENS OF THE UPPER DARKS STAYED HIS SEARCH.
AHHH, CHILDREN! I SPIN A TALE AS TIMELESS AS IMAGINATION--YET--
WHO IS TO SAY THERE IS NO TRUTH TO IT?
TRUTH?
FAH! WHAT DO THEY KNOW OF TRUTH?
THE SPINNER'S WORDS ARE SIMPLY A PLEASANT DIVERSION...
...FOR THEM!

THIS .S HIS CAVERN'S REMOTEST REALM... AND THE TUNNEL IS ONE CURSED AND RUINED AND MYSTERIOUS.
SEEING IT, HIS DEEPEST RACIAL MEMORIES STIR ...THEN BLAZE, --AWAKENED! AND HE KNOWS HE HAS FOUND THE PATH HE SEEKS...
FOR IT IS THE ONLY PASSAGE HIS KIND REMEMBERS... WHICH LEADS UP!
HE CLIMBS SWIFTLY... EAGER IN HIS EXPLOIT.
NOW I'LL SHOW THEM!
I'LL FIND THE GREAT LIGHT ABOVE THE WORLD!
ONLY...
IT'S GETTING VERY... VERY...
DARK!

JUST THICK AIR HUSHES PAST HIM... THE TUNNEL'S HOT BREATH...
THE BREATH OF SOMETHING ELSE
...ALIVE...
THANK THE MOTHERS, I CAN SEE AGAIN!
CAN... CAN I HAVE FOUND THE TOP OF THE WORLD?
THE LIGHT OF A TRILLION LICHEN GLOW IN SOFT HARMONY FOR HIM...
...UPON A WORLD TOTALLY NEW...
ITS DANGERS UNRECOGNIZED...
...AND UNHEEDED..
ROAAARRR!

UNTIL FINALLY MET
YAAAAAAAA!
YIIEEEEEE
NOOOOOOOOOOO!
AND A BRAVE NEW ADVENTURE BECOMES A NIGHTMARE!

AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!

SO COLD!
NEVER FELT--
--SO COLD!

AIR!
HEAT!
THROUGH MYSTIC WATERS HE'D SWUM... ITS VORTEX TRANSPORTING HIM--
--GUIDING HIM TO HIS GOAL...
...TO THE GREAT LIGHT AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD!
"OH! MY CHILDREN! I SPIN A TALE AS TIMELESS AS IMAGINATION--YET--WHO IS TO SAY THERE IS NO TRUTH TO IT?"

Last night's performance at the Twelve Gods' Performing Arts Center was truly an awe inspiring example of skill and creative genius. The Scarlet Eagle Mystical Dance Company's rendition of the "Fallen Angel" is astral ballet at its best.

Particularly memorable is Circe Delta's portrayal of Madame Darkness. This young talent weaves images in time and space which chill the soul, and her use of dragon's breath and demon's fire add new dimensions to a character previously done by such giants as Prolov and Greta Salvor. This critic predicts that Ms. Delta's name will soon be counted in among the great talents of dance.

EXCERPT FROM DAILY INSTRUMENT'S ART SECTION

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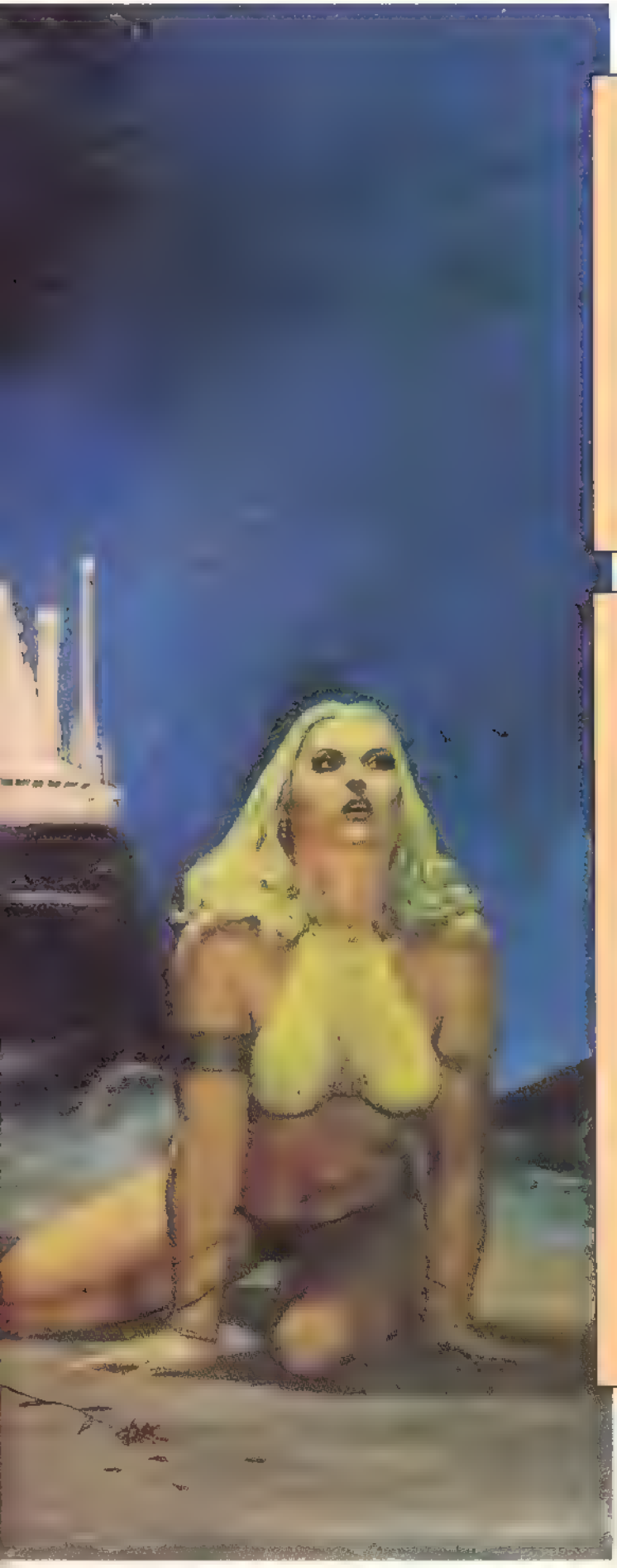


Dear Mistress Delora,

I write to you with a grave darkness in my soul. I and our Sisterhood of Dance have been blackly insulted and libeled.

A craven bitch from that so-called Flower of Light Dance School ruined my greatest triumph by publicly accusing me of plagiarizing my routine from the late Greta Salvor. I consider this charge a bitter affront to myself and our sisterhood.

I feel the only answer to this insult is the "Dance of the Five Levels of Darkness." I seek your permission to deal with this Slut of Flowers in the only way she and her leadfooted cohorts will understand. They must realize that the Sisterhood of the Scarlet Eagle is not an establishment any should dare to trifle with.

Ever Your Obedient Servant,
CIRCE DELTA

Dear Mistress Falstar,

I hope you'll forgive me for not writing sooner, but I've been so busy. After all, this is my first visit to Altarix and there is so much to see.

I've met this lovely man, Lance De Falco. He's a choreographer, and he's showing me around the capitol. I'm having a marvelous time. It's a real adventure.

The only sour note to fall on my trip occurred at the cast party of the Scarlet Eagle's presentation of the "Fallen Angel." I was talking to the troupe's female lead, Circe Delta. I was quite taken with her performance and was congratulating her, but I obviously made a terrible mistake in mentioning that her style reminded me in some ways of the late Greta Salvor in her prime. It was meant as a compliment, but it wasn't taken as such. Ms. Delta hit the roof. She cursed me. She threatened me. She stormed out of the party. It was really weird.

But I refused to let it ruin my evening. Later that night Lance took me to the Hanging Gardens of the Second God, and he showed me a corner of the park he claims none but he knows of. He may be right. We weren't disturbed, but I'll tell you all about that in my next letter.

Your Ever Obedient Pupil
LILITH DAWN

Dear Mariel,

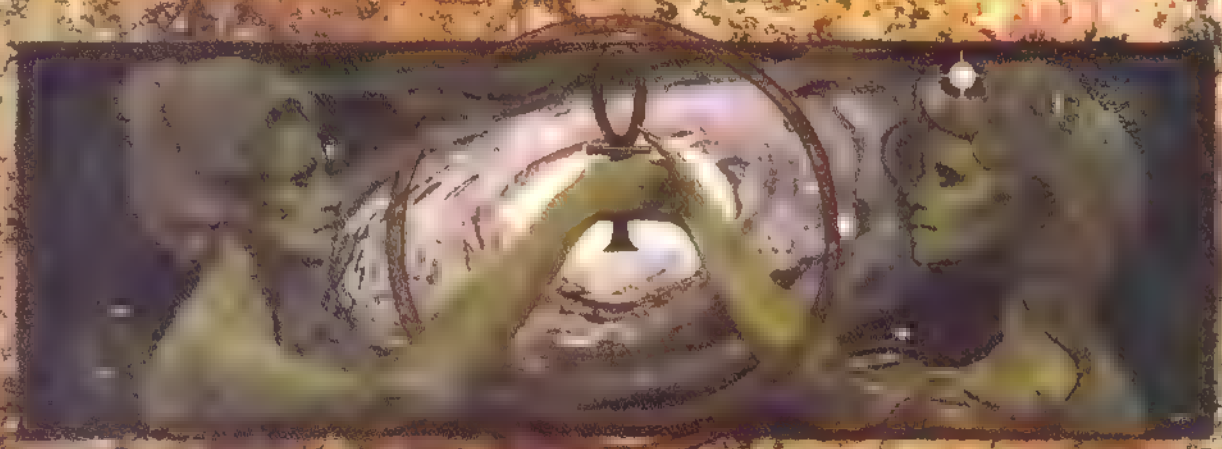
Had a marvelous time at last night's opening of the "Fallen Angel." The Lord High Papal also attended the performance. The entire show was just heavenly, especially Ms. Delta. She was so utterly evil that she gave me gooseflesh. But I find it hard to believe she was just acting. Why?

Well, after the ballet Reginel Calford invited us to the cast party which was simply wonderful, except for this argument between Circe Delta and Lilith Dawn, another dancer. It seems Ms. Dawn said something about Ms. Delta's interpretation which wasn't taken too well. The next thing you know the star of the evening is storming out of the party, carrying on frightfully.

A short time later Ms. Dawn and "Fallen Angel's" director Lance De Falco were seen leaving together. Rumor has it that this had a bit to do with Ms. Delta's little snit. The green-eyed monster, don't you know.

Your Dearest Friend,

GLORY WINDGARDEN



Dear Disciple Delta,

I received your urgent message and agree with your reaction to the brazen insult leveled at our sisterhood by that Light Flower hoofer. I immediately set the issue before the Board of Governors. They voted unanimously to grant your petition, with one condition.

The Board feels that no chances should be taken in this endeavor, for the Holy Instrumentality frowns on any vendettas between dance schools. So the Board decrees that the last movement of the Dance of Darkness should be performed before any other. That way Ms. Dawn will have no chance of escaping our vengeance and alerting the authorities.

Good luck in your venture. I will be awaiting your report on this matter.

Mistress Delora

Dear Lilith,

I'm delighted to hear that you're having such a terrific time on Altarix, but that incident you had with Circe Delta worries me.

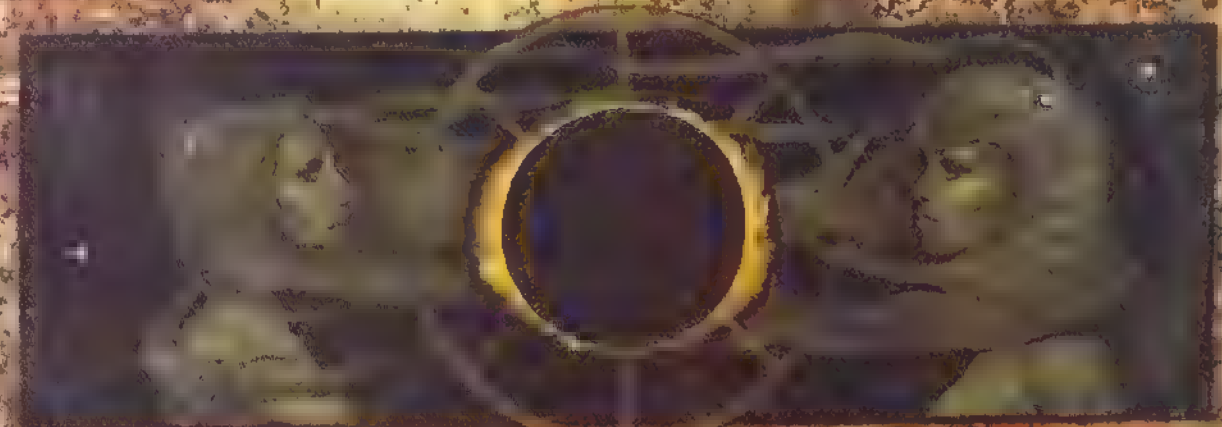
The Sisterhood of the Scarlet Eagle is not a group to take lightly. Their powers are considerable, and their anger is unpredictable. The Sisterhood inbreeds heavily for what they term "desired traits" and are rumored to traffic with unauthorized demons for the talents.

I don't mean to alarm you, child, but I advise that you stay on your guard throughout the remainder of your journey and remember that your steps are but a small part of your dance.

As ever;

Your Devoted Friend and Teacher,

Mistress Falstar



The fools! Who does that Board of Directors think they're dealing with, some novice? They actually want me to change the Order of the Dance of Darkness!

Do they not realize that I am Circe Delta, probably their greatest achievement, their best student? Do they truly fear that some cloddish Flower Lighter could stand against my power?

No! I will not do it! To change the Dance's order is to cheat me of my revenge. That bitch must realize the horror which is upon her and I must be allowed to savor her fear and death.

The Board of Governors will never know.

The First Movement of the Dance of the Five Darknesses paralyzes the lower extremities. It is swift and total. Shock. Terror. Bewilderment...

The Second Movement completes the paralysis from the neck down. The whore finally realizes what has happened to her. There is resolve and resistance. But there is also cold fear.

The Third Movement seizes the lungs, freezes them immobile. By the stars! I can feel her agony, her panic! This is by far the best spell I've ever cast!

The Fourth Movement stops the heart. Damnation! I can actually feel her body spasm, thirsting for blood and air.

The last Movement ruptures the brain. She'll never know just—

DANCER FOUND DEAD

An Instrumentality Security Patrolman early this morning found the nude body of a woman on the south side of Seagate Park. Foul play was initially suspected but an autopsy by the Coroner's Office revealed that the woman had suffered a massive stroke. The victim has been tentatively identified as Ms. Circe Delta. The questions still remain as to why Ms. Delta was without (See Dancer Page 20)

Dear Mistress Falstar,

As you can see from the accompanying news article, your fears concerning Ms. Delta were justified.

She stuck me with the Dance of Darkness at around midnight. Before I knew what was happening, I found myself paralyzed on my bathroom floor. But I remember what you wrote about the steps being only a small part of the dance, a very small part.

You taught me that the greatest portion of any performance takes place within your mind, heart, and soul. That knowledge saved my life.

I instantly began my dance. I whirled through the Dance of Total Reflection and Protection deep within the secret caverns of myself. Poor Ms. Delta, she probably never realized that her own spell had been turned against her.

She most likely thought the pain of her own death was empathic readings from me.

But still Circe Delta was a great dancer and as you taught me, deserving of my respect. So tomorrow before I return home I plan, as a dancer, to honor Circe Delta, my fallen but worthy foe.
Looking forward to seeing you soon.
Your Ever Obedient Pupil,
LILITH DAWN

" I DON'T THINK IT HELPS TO GO OVER AND OVER IT LIKE THIS. "
" STEVE, EACH TIME NEW DETAILS OCCUR TO YOU. BESIDES, IT'S GOOD FOR YOU TO TALK ABOUT IT. "
" I KNOW. I KNOW. TALK. DON'T KEEP ANYTHING BOTTLED UP.
" OKAY. ONCE WE SAW THE WRECKED VEH.CLE WE KNEW WE WERE--"

" PLEASE, STEVE. GIVE THE BACKGROUND. EVERYTHING. "

" YEAH. WELL... OUR TEAM WAS SIX DAYS OUT FROM THE SHIP, COLONY RECKONING. IT WAS TIME TO TURN BACK. FUEL CALCULATIONS ARE MUCH TOO TIGHT TO ALLOW DELAYED DEPARTURES, STILL... THIS WAS THE LAST TRIP IF ANYTHING WAS LEFT ON THIS WORLD WHICH SPAWNED US ALL, WE DIDN'T WANT TO MISS IT. SO, WHEN WE SAW THE VEHICLE, WE DECIDED TO RISK CUTTING IT CLOSE.

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HISTORICALLY, IT'S A DAMN TREASURE TROVE! WE CAN'T JUST SETTLE FOR A GLIDE-BY.
"I NOBODY ARGUED. FUNNY. EARLIER, WE'D CURSED THE WIND... THE DUST... EACH OTHER. THE WHOLE WASTED PLANET. NOW... WE WERE A TEAM AGAIN.
STEVE SAYS CAN DO, I'M FOR IT, FRITZ.
SOME COURSE REPLOTTING, FUDGING ON EQUIPMENT SAFETY WE'LL BUY THREE HOURS, FRITZ
THEN WE EXPLORE! BUILDING ON THE RIGHT SEEMS A BIT LARGER. LET'S START THERE.
AH ..!
"IT FELT GOOD TO SET FOOT ON SOMETHING SOLID, NO MATTER HOW PILED WITH GRIT AND WHILE FRITZ AND PABLO SPECULATED ON ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS, I POKED AROUND
HEY...

"I GUESS IT WAS INSTINCT, WHATEVER, IT SENT ME TO THE HOVER-PAK...
WHEEEEEW
BLOW AWAY A FEW DECADES WORTH OF CRAP.
SHOULD TELL ME IF I'M DELUDING MYSELF OR--
FRITZ...! PABLO..! I'VE FOUND A WAY INTO THIS RELIC. AND MAYBE... A GOOD REASON FOR GOING.
"AT FIRST I THOUGHT DIRT HAD FINALLY GOTTEN TO THE SCANNER ON MY BELT, CAUSING ITS READ-OUT LIGHT TO BLINK. BUT WHEN THE OTHERS TRIED THEIRS .. SAME RESULTS. SOMEWHERE DEEP BELOW US WAS A FUNCTIONING POWER SOURCE

" EVEN WITH THE PORTA-WINCH IT WAS A HELL OF A DESCENT.
" THERE'S SOMETHING SCARY, PRIMORDIAL ABOUT SLIPPING DOWN INTO DARKNESS LIKE THAT.
" IT SEEMED TO TAKE AN ETERNITY TO TOUCH BOTTOM.
BUT IN TIME I DID.
HMMN. BARELY ANY DUST DOWN HERE, STEVE. THE SHAFT IS BETTER SEALED THAN THE EXTERIOR STRUCTURE WOULD INDICATE... AND MUCH DEEPER.
POWER READINGS ARE STRONGER THAN EVER, FRITZ. THEY SEEM TO COME FROM...
" MY LIGHT PICKED OUT A DOOR, HEAVY, VAULT-LIKE. BUILT TO ENDURE MORE THAN TIME OR NATURE HAD SO FAR HURLED ITS WAY.
" AND ALMOST THE INSTANT MY BEAM PLAYED ON ITS OILED SURFACE...
AT LAST...! SOMEONE AT LAST!
CHHHHH!
5
4
3
2
1

"THE SURFACE WAS LONG DEAD, BUT DEEP DOWN HERE WAS LIFE.
"EQUIPMENT HUMMED. RELAYS CLICKED. AND SOMEONE WAITED.
YOU AT THE CONSOLE! STAND UP SO WE CAN--
HE'S BEYOND ALL ABILITY TO COMPLY, I FEAR.
A... COMPUTER!
NOT JUST 'A'... CENTRAL DATA COMMAND. CEN-COM! THE BIGGEST, THE BEST. WORLD LEADERS, MILITARY CHIEFS, HEADS OF INDUSTRY SAT IN THAT CHAIR.
THAT'S WHY MY LOCATION IS SO WELL DISGUISED... AND PROTECTED. THE THINGS THEY STORED WITH ME ...! THE SECRETS WE SHARED...! THE PLANS WE MADE...!
THEN CAME THE WARS, MIGRATIONS, ECOLOGICAL DISASTERS. IN THE END...
...THERE WAS ONLY THE POOR MAJOR HERE, LOCKED AWAY AT HIS POST... UNTIL A HEART ATTACK TOOK HIM. AFTER THAT, SILENCE. NO INPUT. MERELY ENDLESS MAINTENANCE. STILL, HE ALWAYS INSISTED SOMEDAY, SOMEONE WOULD COME BACK...
AND HERE YOU ARE!
PLEASE, GENTLEMEN... SIT! SPEAK. WE HAVE SO MUCH INFORMATION TO SHARE.
FRITZ.? STEVE.? SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.
"WHY NOT? WE HAD AN HOUR, EASY, BY OUR NEW ESTIMATE. TIME TO UNSUIT A LITTLE. RELAX SOME

"SO I SAT IN A DEAD MAN'S CHAIR AND TALKED ABOUT THE COLONIES
AND SPOKE OF HOW WE'D RESENTED THE EXPLOITATION
"...AND HEARD OF THE BREAKDOWN AFTER OUR SPLITTING AWAY.
WHEN I SLOWED DOWN FRITZ CHIMED IN.
"LONG BORED WITH EACH OTHER, THIS EAGER NEW AUDIENCE MADE CONVERSATION FRESHER, EASIER.
VD 2 66N
"BY PABLO'S TURN...
"...IT WAS LESS LIKE TALKING TO A MACHINE
"...THAN BEING REUNITED WITH AN OLD FRIEND AND FILLING IN THE YEARS.
"UNTIL, IT REGISTERED, THAT IN THE PLEASURE OF TALKING...
"...WE'D CEASED TO LISTEN.
...TOO MUCH TO SHARE IN JUST AN HOUR, EVEN DAYS...
...MONTHS, OR EVEN--

FRITZ.
"HE NODDED. WE CAUGHT PABLO'S EYE
WAIT NOW. WHAT'S THIS?
YOU'RE NOT LEAVING? WE'VE SCARCELY BEGUN TO TALK
THERE'LL BE OTHER EXPEDI-TIONS
WHEN? HOW LONG? SUPPOSE COLONY SENTIMENT TURNS AGAINST IT? YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE, FUNCTIONING BUT WITHOUT FUNCTION! PERHAPS ONE OF YOU CAN STAY.. TWO...
"WE LOOKED TO EACH OTHER, AS THOUGH PERHAPS CONSIDERING,
"THEN..
"WE RAN.
"NOT SOON ENOUGH OR FAST ENOUGH.
"...FOR PABLO AND ME,
ZZRRAAAAAK!
OHMIGOD OHMIGOD.

"BUT FRITZ WAS STILL MOVING OUT TO THE CORRIDOR, UP INTO THE SHAFT.
"I COULD HEAR THE WINCH. HE'D MADE IT.
"PABLO WAS DEAD. I WAS DYING, LAYING THERE IN SHOCK AS MY LIFE BLOOD GUSHED ONTO THE COLD STEEL FLOOR.
GET TO THE SHIP, FRITZ! HAVE 'EM *NUKE* THIS BASTARD MACHINE!
VID 5
"HE'D ALMOST HAD TIME ENOUGH TO REACH THE ROOF.
"... WHEN AN EXPLOSION RATTLED SHAFT AND BUILDING TO THE FOUNDATION.

AND THE NEXT THING THAT I HEARD...
WAS THE IMPACT WHEN HIS BODY FELL
YOU SON OF A BITCH PIECE OF JUNK! YOU UNFEELING--
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS IN A MOMENT... STEVE. STEVE IS WHAT THE OTHERS CALLED YOU, CORRECT?
RIGHT NOW, THERE'S CLEANING UP TO DO.
IF I TRULY WERE UNFEELING, I WOULDN'T BOTHER. REMEMBER THE MAJOR? IT'S YOU WHO'LL BE GLAD NOT TO HAVE TO LOOK AT THIS
YOU STUPID MONSTROSITY! I'LL BE DEAD AS PABLO, FRITZ, AND THE MAJOR! THE ONLY THING YOU'LL EVER TALK TO IS YOURSELF UNTIL YOU OR THIS PLANET FALL APART!
AND THAT'S WHEN THE TRUE HORROR STARTED

THE BEAM CAUTERIZED AS IT CUT YOU, STEVE.
MY SCANNERS INDICATED YOU COULD SURVIVE THE SHOCK. UNLIKE POOR PABLO, I'VE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT PRESERVING HUMAN LIFE SINCE THE MAJOR HAD HIS HEART ATTACK...
..AS THE RESULT OF MY TRYING TO STOP HIM FROM ESCAPING.
UP WE GO! YOU'LL BE JUST FINE VERY, VERY SOON. AND, EVEN IF THE SHAFT WEREN'T SEALED OFF NOW FROM THE BLAST..
...I DON'T SUPPOSE IT'S LIKELY YOU'LL BE RUNNING AWAY.
YES, STEVE, I BELIEVE WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK NOW...
..TOTALLY UNDISTURBED!
"THERE, DONE, CEN-COM. CAN WE MOVE ON TO SOMETHING ELSE?"
"DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND YET, STEVE? THERE'S NO NEED TO RUSH ANY SUBJECT. WE HAVE FOREVER. NOW... AGAIN, PLEASE. PERHAPS WITH MORE ABOUT TRAVELING HERE..."

ACE OF SPACE

1: THE MONSTER

THE INSTRUMENTS SHOW THAT IT'S AN EARTH-TYPE PLANET, IN ITS THIRD EVOLUTIONARY PHASE. THERE ARE PROBABLY SOME SENTIENT LIFE-FORMS
THAT'S GREAT!
ACE, TAKE THE SHUTTLE AND BEGIN A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION
VERY GOOD, PROFESSOR!
SINCE THIS WORLD IS IN ITS THIRD EVOLUTIONARY PHASE THERE MAY BE SOME DANGEROUS ANIMALS. BE CAREFUL AND MAINTAIN CONSTANT COMMUNICATION WITH THE TERRACUS.
THE SCANNER INDICATES AN ATMOSPHERIC MIXTURE LIKE EARTH'S. I WON'T NEED A SPACE SUIT.
WHAT VEGETATION
SUDDENLY...
¡GRRUUUAAOOO!
A STAMPEDE!
¡GRAAAUUOOOOOO!
THAT MONSTER MUST BE THE ONE THAT MADE THAT SOUND. IT'S TERRIFYING. NO WONDER THE OTHERS RAN!

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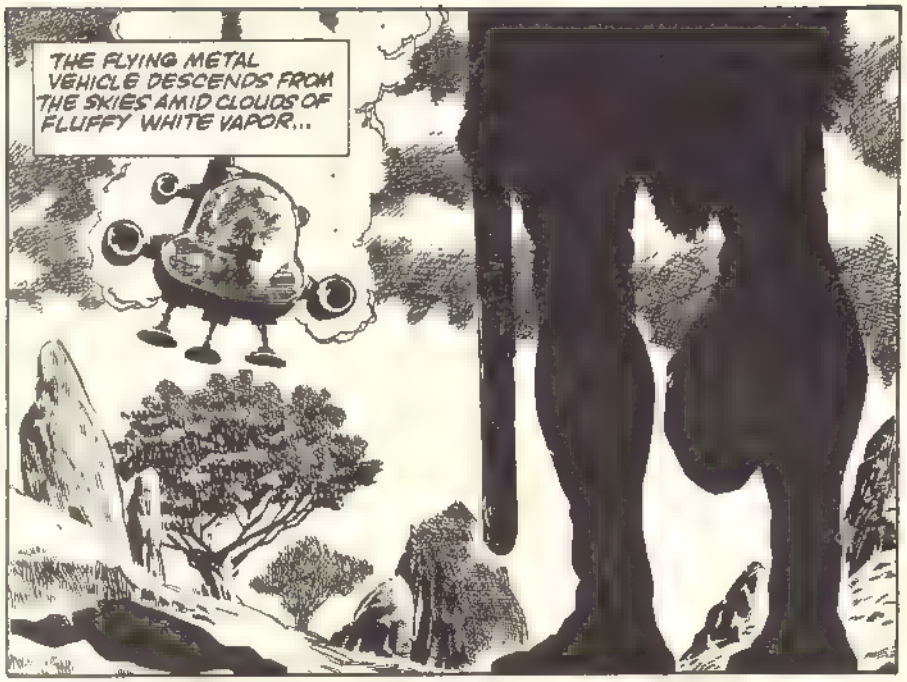
THERE IT S AGAIN... BUT WHO COULD HAVE--?
¡GROOAAUU!
TERRACUS HERE. WHAT THE DEVIL MADE THAT MONSTROUS SCREAM?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT JUDGING FROM THE WAY THE OTHERS BOLTED WHEN THEY HEARD IT, IT MUST BE ENORMOUS.
I'LL H DE N HERE FOR A WHILE...
WHAT A CUTE LITTLE CREATURE! POOR LITTLE TH NG . HE'S TOTALLY OUT OF PLACE IN THIS WORLD OF GIANTS...
¡GRAAOUU!
TH-THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
?
LATER...
THIS IS THE CREATURE THAT MADE THAT AWFUL SOUND? ACE, WHAT KIND OF FOOL DO YOU TAKE ME FOR?
I'VE DECIDED THAT THAT YELL IS SOME KIND OF DEFENSE NATURE HAS ARMED THE CREATURE WITH TO ENABLE IT TO SURVIVE IN A WORLD OF MONSTERS. SEE FOR YOURSELF, PROFESSOR...
¡GROOUU!
¡AAAA
AND SO..
THE FACT IS THAT I NEVER KNOW HOW TO PLEASE THE PROFESSOR..IF I DON T BRING THE CREATURE TO HIM I'M NEGLECT NG MY DUTIES. F I DO BR NG IT HE SAYS IT WAS RRESPONS BLE OF ME TO VIOLATE THE SECURITY OF THE SHIP... A GUY CAN'T WIN!
?
AD uyll
e

ACE OF SPACE

2: THE HERO



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I WILL USE MY MIGHTY CLUB. WITH IT, I HAVE DEALT WITH THOUSANDS OF HIS KIND!
WHAT A BARBARIAN! THOSE COMIC BOOK WRITERS REALLY EXAGGERATE THINGS!
DON'T YOU THINK WE OUGHT TO GET OUT OF HERE? THAT BEATING YOU TOOK MUST HAVE GIVEN YOU QUITE A HEADACHE...
MY HEAD ONLY HURTS WHEN I THINK. .GIVE ME BACK MY CLUB!
TAKE THAT, YOU EVIL CREATURE!

WHO IS THAT BEAUTIFUL DAMSEL?
SHE COMES TO TEND MY WOUNDS AFTER MY TITANIC BATTLES... NATURALLY, SHE IS IN LOVE WITH ME.
NATURALLY... AND YOU WITH HER?
SOMETIMES YES, SOMETIMES NO. TODAY, FOR EXAMPLE, I'M NOT IN THE MOOD.
LET US FOLLOW OUR ROAD...
WAIT! IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOUR DAMSEL HAS A LITTLE PROBLEM!
BAH! NOW IT'S THIS UGLY OGRE'S TURN TO BE TAKEN CARE OF! I HAVE TO SAVE HER FROM ONE OF THEM EVERY FIFTEEN MINUTES. FREE HER, YOU SICKENING BEAST, OR FEEL THE BITE OF MY SWORD!
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO GIVE YOU A HAND? I HAVE A LITTLE DEVICE HERE, AND...
DON'T TALK NONSENSE! I AM THE HERO!

A HERO'S BARE HANDS ARE ALL HE NEEDS TO TAKE CARE OF A MERE GIANT.
EXCUSE ME! I'M MORE USED TO HEROES LIKE DONALD DUCK AND SNOOPY...
DIE, DOG!
YOU KNOW IT SEEMS TO ME I'VE READ THAT PHRASE SOMEWHERE BEFORE.
VERY WELL, MY CHILD. I WILL PERMIT YOU TO SPEND THE REST OF THE DAY ADMIRING ME. I'M IN A BETTER HUMOR NOW...
SUDDENLY, I FEEL LIKE I'D BETTER GET BACK TO MY SHIP BEFORE I FORGET HOW TO FLY IT...
NOTE: ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE HERO CONTAINED IN THIS STORY AND THE REST OF THE LEVIATHANS OF COMICS SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A MERE COINCIDENCE...
...ALTHOUGH SOME RESEMBLANCE MIGHT EXIST.

WORSE, I'VE NO GUIDE BACK TO THE DOCKS
BUT IS THAT REALLY WHERE I WANT TO GO?!
I'VE NO LIKING FOR PIRACY, EVEN IF TARIC'S CREW ACCEPTS ME IN HIS STEAD. AND I WOULDN'T BE HELPING ARI.
SUPPOSE INSTEAD I JUST FIND A PLACE TO HIDE 'TIL THINGS QUIET DOWN...
...THEN BUY OR STEAL A CHANGE OF CLOTHES AND TRY FOR JAFFAR -?
DAMN!
TOO MANY OF THEM -- AND I'VE NO ROOM TO MANEUVER, NO WAY TO ESCAPE.
DONAL, BELOVED, I'LL SOON BE BY YOUR SIDE. FORGIVE ME...
BY THE GODS!!
BEFORE OUR EYES -- SHE VANISHED!

... FOR FAILING YOUR DAUGHTER--
WHAT IN HADES?!!
THE ALLEY'S -- BECOME A PALACE!
I'VE BEEN SAVED -- BUT BY WHOM, AND WHY ??!
A MAGICIAN, THAT MUCH IS OBVIOUS-- DONAL Mac-LLANLLWYR USED A SIMILAR SPELL OF TRANSPORTATION WHEN HE FIRST TOOK ME TO HIS HOME, FABLED ASHANRIAR.
ACCORDING TO TARIC, THERE'S ONLY ONE SUCH HERE-ABOUTS: JAFFAR.
THAT ANSWERS "WHO", BUT NOT WHY.
THE MIRROR -- MY REFLECTION'S CHANGING!
NO -- BY ALL THE GODS, NOT MY REFLECTION--
--I AM!
CLEANED, COIFFED, GOWNED, PERFUMED -- I LOOK LIKE A PRINCESS!
HE'S A CAREFUL MAN, THIS SORCERER -- MY SWORD AND DAGGERS VANISHED WITH MY OLD CLOTHES.
GOOD EVENTIDE, MAID.
JAFFAR IBN HAROUN AL-RASHID BIDS YOU WELCOME TO HIS HOUSE.
HOW MAY HE SERVE YOU?

OVER A DINNER MORE SUMPTUOUS THAN ANY MARADA CAN REMEMBER, HER TALE IS TOLD...
YOU ENCOUNTERED A GYATRIAS--THEY DWELL IN THE VOID BETWEEN WORLDS, NO REAL DANGER TO AN ADEPT...
...BUT THE OCCASIONAL NOVICE IS ALWAYS FALLING PREY TO THEM.
AS FOR TARIC REDHAND...
...HE BROUGHT HIS LONG-OVERDUE AND RICHLY-DESERVED FATE UPON HIMSELF. DO NOT MOURN HIM, MY DEAR.
HE WAS NOT THE KINDEST--OR MOST HONORABLE--OF MEN.
ARE YOU, LORD JAFFAR?
GIVEN APPROPRIATE INCENTIVE.
JUDGING FROM MY RECEPTION, I EVIDENTLY QUALIFY.
I CAN'T DENY, HE IS ATTRACTIVE. NOR CAN I DENY MY RESPONSE.
BUT DO I LIKE HIM, OR IS HE CASTING SOME ENCHANTMENT TO BEND ME TO HIS DESIRE--CHANGING MY MIND AS HE DID MY CLOTHES ?
DAMN ALL WIZARDS--THEY'RE TOO SUBTLE AND MANIPULATIVE BY HALF ! I NEED TIME--TO GATHER MY WITS--OH!
WHY SO AFRAID?
I'M...NOT USED TO PEOPLE POPPING IN AND OUT OF THIN AIR.
YOU'RE DISSEMBLING, MARADA--THAT ISN'T THE REASON AT ALL.
DO YOU FEAR MY SORCERY? THERE IS NONE BETWEEN US--YOU HAVE MY WORD--SAVE THE NATURAL, HUMAN DESIRE OF MAN FOR WOMAN...
... AND WOMAN FOR MAN AGAINST SUCH EMOTIONS, SUCH POWER...
...RESISTANCE IS USELESS.

I WAS BORN ON SUCH A WILD NIGHT, THE THUNDER SO LOUD IT SHOOK ALL ROME. THAT CELESTIAL DISPLAY-- AND MY SILVER HAIR-- MY MOTHER SAID, MARKED ME AS A CHILD OF THE GODS.
DO YOU THINK THEY'RE SALUTING US, JAFFAR, OR SENDING A WARNING ?
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO ASK ?
JOVE!
WHERE DID *THAT* COME FROM ?! THE SKY WAS CLEAR A MOMENT AGO !
SHE THOUGHT I SPOKE IN JEST-- WOULD THAT I HAD.
THOU SUMMON'ST ME, O MY MASTERS ?
STAND FORTH, MOST FAVORED OF OUR BRETHREN ON THE EARTH. THAT THOU MAYST HEAR THE CHARGE OF THY DREAD LORDS, THE ***MABDHARA !***

THY POWER IS DERIVED FROM THE ABYSS WHICH IS OUR DOMAIN, IT IS TO OUR SERVICE THOU ART SWORN, THY ETERNAL FEALTY PLEDGED.
I HAVE NE'ER FAILED THEE, LORDS. STATE THY WILL...
... AND I SHALL SEE IT DONE.
THE WOMAN WHO IS THY GUEST IS KNOWN TO US. HER BRIGHT, SHARP BLADE COST US OUR BROTHER, Y'GARON!
IF THOU WOULDST FIND FAVOR IN OUR EYES, JAFFAR, THEN BEFORE THE SUNRISE--
--MARADA MUST DIE!
WIZARD'S MASQUE CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE!